

This amendment fills a crucial gap because it would serve all veterans with disabilities, regardless of the severity of the disability and whether the disability is service connected or not.

With this amendment, eligible veterans would have the opportunity to renovate and modify their existing homes by installing wheelchair ramps, widening doors, re-equipping rooms, and making necessary additions and adjustments to existing structures—all so these homes are more suitable and safer for our veterans.

I hope we can work together to consider these amendments, and other amendments that have been proposed by my colleagues.

As for the underlying bill, I wish to point out a few more of its highlights.

The bill authorizes a 1.7-percent across-the-board pay raise and reauthorizes over 30 types of bonuses and special payments for our men and women in uniform.

It authorizes the Secretary of Defense to carry out a research program with community partners to enhance DOD efforts in research, treatment, education, and outreach on mental health, substance use disorders, and traumatic brain injury in Guard and Reserve members, their families, and their caregivers—a provision which I worked on with Senator AYOTTE to have included in this bill. We have an incredible problem with respect to returning veterans, active-duty personnel, and their families in addressing their mental health challenges, and unless we fully engage all the resources across this country, we will not be able to successfully meet the needs of these young men and women. We hope this amendment will help in that regard.

The legislation also extends authorities to continue several “train and equip” programs to assist foreign militaries in counterterrorism and counter-narcotics missions. This is one of the emerging and critical roles that in the future we must embrace and support.

Additionally, the legislation authorizes \$5.7 billion for the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund to build the capacity of the Afghan Army and police so those forces can continue to take the security lead throughout Afghanistan. Once again, this is a central foundation to our plans to withdraw the vast majority of our forces by 2014.

This year once again I had the honor of serving as the chairman of the Seapower Subcommittee, alongside Senator WICKER, my colleague from Mississippi, the ranking member. Working together, our subcommittee focused on the needs of the Navy, the Marine Corps, and strategic mobility forces. We put particular emphasis on supporting marine and naval forces engaged in combat operations, improving efficiencies, and applying the savings to higher priority programs.

Specifically, the bill includes the required funding for two Virginia-class submarines, provides multiyear procurement authority to the Navy to

purchase the next block of submarines, authorizes the Navy to use incremental funding to buy an additional Virginia-class submarine in fiscal year 2014, and provides an additional \$777.7 million in advance procurement for that second boat in 2014.

The bill also approves the funding for other major programs, including the DDG-1000, the Aircraft Carrier Replacement Program, the DDG-51 Aegis destroyer program, the Littoral Combat Ship, the Joint High Speed Vessel, and the P-8 maritime patrol aircraft.

I am particularly pleased about the funding for the Virginia-class submarines and the DDG-1000, which so many Rhode Islanders help to build.

We also included language that would permit the Navy to use multiyear procurement authority to buy the V-22 Osprey aircraft and the Arleigh Burke-class destroyers so we can procure these platforms as efficiently as possible.

I want to offer my particular thanks to Senator WICKER, the other members of the Seapower Subcommittee, and our staffs who have done an extraordinary job through their diligence, their dedication, and their profound commitment to the men and women, particularly, of the Navy and the Marine Corps.

We have a good bill before the Senate. I urge adoption of the amendments I have discussed, and I would urge very quickly and very timely the passage of the legislation so we can once again send the Defense authorization bill to the President for his signature.

With that, I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN of Ohio). Morning business is closed.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2013

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 3254, which the clerk will report by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 3254) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2013 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Kyl amendment No. 3123, to require regular updates of Congress on the military implications of proposals of the United States and Russia under consideration in negotiations on nuclear arms, missile defense, and long-range conventional strike system matters.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Michigan is recognized.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, before Senator REED leaves the floor, I want

to first thank him for his comments about myself and Senator MCCAIN and the other members of our committee. Senator REED of Rhode Island has and will continue to make—and, hopefully, for many decades to come—an extraordinary contribution to the work of this body. I have seen it firsthand on the Armed Services Committee where he is the chairman of the SeaPower Subcommittee, but way beyond that. He brings an experience and a thoughtful commitment to this work which is second to none, and it is incredibly valuable to every member of our committee to have him as a member of the committee. I cannot express how grateful I am for that, and I cannot exaggerate how grateful I am for his presence and for his work.

Mr. REED. If I may simply say that I thank the chairman.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, in a few minutes I hope to be able to lay out a roadmap for our work here—at least for the next couple hours. We hope to be able to deal with a modified Kyl amendment as well as dispose of, we hope, an Ayotte amendment and a Hagan amendment. There will be debate with each of those, and this is just tentative because I want to discuss this, obviously, with Senator MCCAIN. But if this works out, there could be a couple votes in an hour or so. But, again, I am not announcing that; I am just sort of giving as early a warning as I can to our colleagues as to what is at least a likely prospect at this time. But, again, that is going to have to await the presence of Senator MCCAIN, with whom I am working so closely on this matter.

So with that, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMENDMENTS NOS. 2888, 2924, 2949, 2960, 2963, 2969, 2991, 3083

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside and that the following amendments be called up and agreed to en bloc, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate: Kohl No. 2888, Manchin No. 2924, Webb No. 2949, Wyden No. 2960, Sessions No. 2963, Heller No. 2969, Hoeven No. 2991, and Barrasso No. 3083.

Mr. MCCAIN. All these amendments have been cleared on our side.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendments were agreed to, as follows: